

A new *Libethra* from Ecuador.

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Key words

Phasmida, *Libethra* sp., breeding, rearing.

Origin of culture

I bought one adult pair of stick-insects from Ecuador at the AES exhibition in England on 3rd October 1992. By comparison with other species, I identified them as a *Libethra* sp. About two weeks later the male died. Two weeks thereafter the female died too, but she had already laid 14 eggs. The nymphs started hatching in March and they accepted bramble without any problems, but some of the nymphs died before their first skin shedding. At the moment I have 7 adult females, 3 adult males and 2 male nymphs at the third and fourth instar. For the moment everything is going very well. The oldest females have just started laying eggs and as soon as I have enough eggs I will send them to other breeders. I wonder if there is anybody else that might have this species in culture.

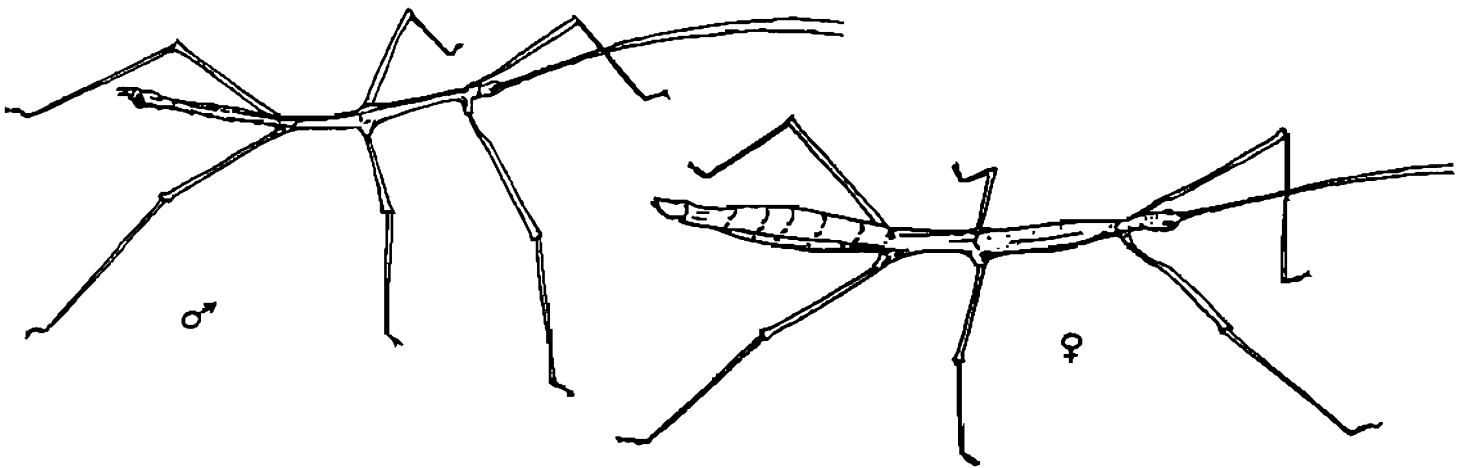


Figure 1. Male and female *Libethra* sp.

Males (Figs. 1 & 2)

The males resemble the males of *Libethra regularis* Brunner, but they are more slender and a bit longer. Their colour is not as dark as that of the males of *L. regularis*; their body is brown. The legs are also brown in colour and they have two very small black points on each knee. The tarsal segments are short. The arolium and the two elaspers are very small, being almost invisible. Their eyes are very large in comparison with the head. Only the mesothorax has got a few very small spines, these look like black points. Further their skin is very smooth. The males have got a dark brown line on the dorsal surface of their body; at some places this line is not very visible. Their antennae are clearly longer than their fore legs. Their typical rest position is with their fore legs straight before them, in line with their antennae. The males become adult after about four and a half months. I do not see them mating very often and when they do so, it is not for longer than one night.

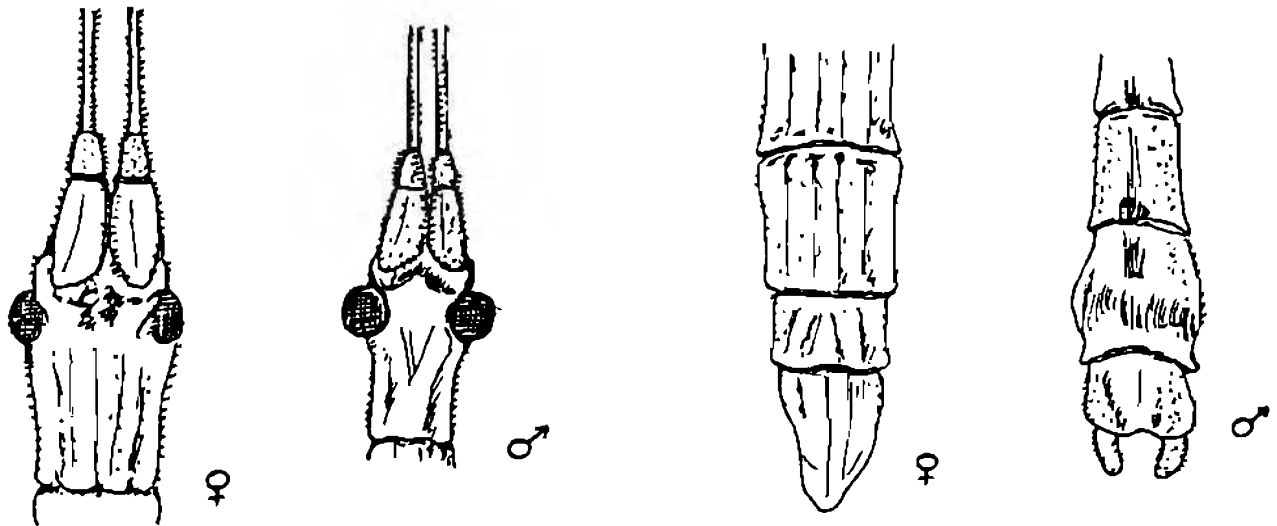


Figure 2. Heads and terminal segments of the adults.

Females (Figs. 1 & 2)

The females are also longer and more slender than the females of *L. regularis*, although they are similar to them. This species also has a relatively fat abdomen. Their body surface is completely smooth. The body colour is light brown to beige. The front legs are the same colour as the body, but the middle and hind legs are much darker in colour, being dark brown. The antennae end exactly at the end of the front legs. Their eyes are not as large as the eyes of the males. The females also take up the typical resting position of the males. The females become adult in about 5 months and then they start laying eggs after 3 weeks. After that they lay about 3 or 4 eggs per week.

	males	females
Antennae	47	31
Front femora	18	16
Front tibia	22	17
Front legs	43	36
Middle legs	34	28
Hind legs	42	36
Body (without antennae)	57	57

Table 1. The average sizes of males and females in millimetres (mm).

Eggs (Fig. 3)

The eggs are about 3mm long, 2mm high and 1.3mm wide. They are light grey in colour and they have four large squarish pits on each side. The operculum is flat and oval shaped. There is no capitulum. There is a black triangle on the pale micropylar plate. The eggs are very large in

comparison with the females and that is the reason why the females produce only a few eggs each week.

Nymphs

The nymphs are typical of *L. regularis* nymphs and they have the same rest position (Fig 3). They hatch about 5 months after the eggs are laid. Newly hatched nymphs have a body length of about 15mm. They don't move much during the day, even at night they won't walk more than is needed to find their food. None of my nymphs had problems with skin shedding.

Behaviour

They don't have any really active defensive methods, only passive ones. The males in particular resemble branches. They often simply hang between the food plants. The females mostly lie on the ground. When they are disturbed they run away, but not very fast and the females don't run away as fast as the males. They are easily calmed down by putting them in their cage again and they will immediately stop in their typical rest position.



Figure 3. Dorsal & lateral views of the egg, and a nymph in the typical resting position.

Food plants

When I bought them there was oak in the plastic box, but they accepted bramble immediately. Also the newly hatched nymphs didn't have any problem starting to feed on bramble. The other accepted foodplants are rose and pyracantha. They don't like ivy or privet.

Breeding conditions

I kept the eggs, nymphs and adults at a temperature between 19°C and 24°C. The eggs were kept slightly humid and the animals have a fairly high humidity, being sprayed every evening. The cage is not very large, but must be high enough for successful skin shedding. A layer of sand or soil about 4cm deep is needed because the females bury their eggs.

Comments

This seems to be an easy species to breed. I don't know yet how long the adults live, but I assume that they will live for at least 4 months, by comparison with *L. regularis*. It is very remarkable that the male's body is exactly as long as the body of the female. At the first sight the male seems to be larger than the female, this is because they have longer legs.

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